

12 APR 1972

PEOPLE

Farewell to a Soviet Editor

"I suppose you have an invitation," said one of the legion of dark suited men standing at the door of the Russian Embassy.

And anyone who could produce one was welcomed up the stairs to a reception.

Ambassador and Mrs. Anatoly Dobrynin were hosting a hail and farewell party last night for departing Counselor Editor of Soviet Life magazine and Mrs. Georgi Isachenko and their replacements, Counselor and Mrs. Anatoly Mkrtchyan.

The embassy buffet was loaded with food, although there was less caviar than usual—"Do you know caviar has gone up \$20 an ounce," someone remarked to a friend. But there was plenty of fresh fruit (scarce in the Soviet Union during the winter) and bottles of Stolichnaya vodka.

It was mostly a press party with President Nixon's press secretary Ron Ziegler the top U.S. guest to honor the two Soviet journalists.

Leonard Reed, the USIA editor of America Illustrated—the American counterpart to Soviet Life—was also at the reception last night.

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Although he is on congenial terms with the outgoing Soviet editor (they lunched together twice a year) Reed refused to have his picture taken with him.

Mkrtchyan was a journalist in Armenia for eight years before going to Moscow where he has been with the research program of the International Labor Movement.

As one guest pointed out, the editorship of Soviet Life and the Tass job at the Embassy always appear to belong to Armenians.

In Russia, it seems, if a radio or television announcer, journalist or cartoonist wants to criticize the government politically they put the criticism in the mouths of Armenians, i.e. "There were these two Armenian guys talking about Khrushchev, see . . ."

And the government never takes offense.